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SUBJECT: JORDAN: 2009 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM (CORRECTED COPY)

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

¶1. (SBU) Through both its public statements and its actions, the Jordanian Government continues to demonstrate a solid commitment to combat terrorist groups and extremist ideologies.

¶2. (SBU) Despite the government's steadfast support, however, extremist messages still find a receptive audience with a small, but steady, proportion of the total population. According to polling data compiled by the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes survey for 2009, the percentage of Jordanians expressing "confidence" in Usama bin Laden crept upwards to 28% from 19% in 2008. According to WorldPublicOpinion.org (affiliated with the University of Maryland) roughly 27% of Jordanians stated that they had "positive" feelings toward bin Laden, and another 27% expressed mixed feelings toward him.

¶3. (SBU) Following personnel changes within the government, Jordanian discontinued an incipient engagement with HAMAS which had begun in 2008. The abortive dialogue with HAMAS was considered surprising in light of Jordan's hostile stance toward the group. Although the King permitted HAMAS leader Khaled Meshaal into the country briefly for the funeral of his father, Jordanian security remained vigilant against any effort to establish cells or use Jordanian territory as a base of operations against Israel.

¶4. (SBU) The Jordanian government continued its solid political and material support for the Palestinian Authority (PA) and for PA President Mahmoud Abbas. The King routinely expresses unqualified support for the peace process and for a negotiated settlement of the Israel-Palestine dispute. Jordan has facilitated the regional peace process by training five battalion-sized elements of the Palestine Security Forces at the Jordan International Police Training Center (JIPTC) outside of Amman, including two such training rotations in ¶2009. JIPTC-trained forces have since been deployed throughout the West Bank, where their motivation and professionalism have earned praise from the different regional parties.

¶5. (SBU) Despite the government's antipathy toward HAMAS, popular support for the organization continued to run high in Jordan, particularly in the aftermath of the Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip in December 2008. Numerous street demonstrations took place throughout Jordan in protest of the Israeli operation. Polling data from previous years has revealed that a majority of Jordanians view HAMAS as a legitimate resistance organization.

¶6. (SBU) Jordan continues to place a strong emphasis upon countering extremist propaganda, fighting radicalization, and strengthening interfaith coexistence and dialogue. Building upon the foundations of the 2005 Amman Message, Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah II, strongly condemned extremist violence and the takfiri ideology that promotes it. The Royal Aal-al Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought under the leadership of Prince Ghazi bin-Talal continued its sponsorship of the "Common Word" series of ecumenical and interfaith conferences and lectures in the U.S., the UK, and elsewhere. The "Common Word" program began as a response to the controversy caused by Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 address in Regensburg. In May, 2009 Jordan hosted a successful papal visit.

Jordanian government officials and media routinely reinforce the importance of interfaith dialogue and tolerance.

¶17. (SBU) At the same time the government undertook concrete measures to address the threat of takfiri ideology in the country. Recognizing the key role that incarceration has played in the radicalization of many terrorists (including the Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi), Jordanian authorities continued their 2008 program of theological engagement of suspected takfirists and other radical inmates. This program employs carefully selected and vetted religious scholars and jurists to introduce or reinforce more balanced and moderate views, based upon established Islamic jurisprudence and teachings. In the summer of 2009, Jordanian correctional authorities introduced a classification system for prisoners that allowed authorities to more readily identify and segregate adherents of violent extremist ideologies.

¶18. (SBU) Jordan's security forces continue robust programs to prevent terror attacks in the country and to deny terrorists the use of its territory to launch attacks against its neighbors. For example, the first phase of the Joint Border Security Program (JBSP) was completed in September 2009, including the installation of a suite of monitoring and communications equipment along a 50km stretch of Jordan's border with Syria, and associated training. This border area has historically presented the highest risk of illicit infiltration and smuggling across Jordan's border and it accounted for the greatest number of interdictions by Jordanian law enforcement. The completion of this portion of the JSBP program significantly enhances Jordan's detection capabilities and allows Jordan to respond to incidents more quickly.

¶19. (SBU) In August 2009, Jordan, with USG support, hosted a

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conference establishing the Regional Biometric Partnership Initiative, bringing together law enforcement, security, and forensic experts from twelve Middle Eastern countries. Jordan presented a tailored biometric software package and proposed the creation of a regional biometric database for known and suspected terrorists in the region to allow the efficient sharing of data between governments. The proposal won an endorsement in principal from other participants and could potentially do much to thwart terrorist travel and deny them safe havens.

¶10. Jordan welcomed U.S. training and assistance designed to strengthen security at its ports of entry. In December 2008, the U.S. and Jordan signed a memorandum of understanding for the Megaports Initiative, an agreement under which the U.S. National Nuclear Safety Administration works collaboratively with its Jordanian counterparts to equip seaports and other ports of entry with radiation detection equipment to prevent terrorists from acquiring, smuggling and using dangerous nuclear materials to develop a weapon of mass destruction or radiological dispersal devices. Similarly, Jordan has striven to develop a comprehensive strategic trade control program to better manage the transit and transshipment of items of proliferation concern. In support of this effort Jordan issued regulations governing the import and transit of dual-use items, established the interagency "Export Committee for Dual-Use Items," and participated in almost one dozen conferences and capacity-building activities.

¶11. (SBU) Jordan's security services remained intensely engaged against terrorist threats. As a result of their vigilance, several planned attacks were disrupted prior to execution. The State Security Court (SSC) has primary jurisdiction for terrorism cases and it maintained a substantial caseload during 2009. For example:

-- In March, three Jordanians were convicted and sentenced to 22 years for plotting a suicide car bombing against a Roman Catholic Church. The plotters had originally wanted to strike police facilities but shifted their focus to a Christian target after their surveillances revealed the difficulty of striking the police.  
-- In April, four men were arrested and charged with plotting attacks in Israel in retaliation for the Israeli incursion into Gaza. The men were reportedly in possession of firearms at the time of their apprehension. The alleged leader of the cell, Usama Abu

Kabir, had been released from U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay in November 2007, after nearly six years of imprisonment.

-- In April, the SSC sentenced three men to five years' imprisonment for plotting and preparing attacks against Israeli targets on behalf of HAMAS. Potential targets included the Israeli Embassy in Amman and border posts in Jordan Valley.

-- In October, the SSC imposed sentences of 15 to 20 years on twelve Jordanian Al Qa'ida sympathizers for attempting to attack a Christian church in the northern city of Irbid, as well as a Christian cemetery in the same city. This group was also reportedly affiliated with an individual who fired upon a visiting Lebanese Christian choir in Amman in 2008.

¶12. (SBU) In November, the Court of Cassation reduced the sentence of Muamar Yusef al-Jaghbir to 15 years incarceration for his role in the 2002 assassination of USAID Officer Thomas Foley. Al Jaghbir was convicted of playing a secondary role in the killing, and had been previously convicted and sentenced to death in July in the SSC, but the Court of Cassation reviewed the case and reduced the sentence on appeal. He was also credited with the six years al Jaghbir had already served in U.S. or Jordanian custody following his 2003 apprehension in Iraq. This ruling, however, is unlikely to result in al-Jaghbir's release in the future: he is also awaiting execution for his role in the August 2003 car bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad that killed at least 14 people.

¶13. (SBU) Jordan has been intensely targeted by Al Qa'ida in the past and Al Qa'ida's leadership has repeatedly called for attacks against the Hashemite Government and Western interests in the country. In March 2009, for example, Al Qa'ida deputy Ayman Zawahiri called for extremists to "move into Jordan" from secure bases in Iraq in order to attack Jerusalem.

¶14. (SBU) Jordan is a strong partner in the struggle against terrorists, but its financial sector remains vulnerable to money-laundering and terrorism finance. Jordan has an Anti-Money Laundering (AML) law and in 2008, the Jordanian Securities Commission Board of Commissioners issued AML regulations for securities activities, a positive step toward defining obligated entities falling under the regulatory purview of the Commission. Furthermore, in 2009, Jordan began steps to implement a cross-border currency declaration form. Despite these measures, however, a Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF) review identified deficiencies in 14 of 16 core and key FATF recommendations for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Among the issues identified in the report are the absence of some predicate offenses in the existing AML statute, inadequate criminalization of terrorist financing, and the lack of

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legal procedures for freezing funds and assets of persons named pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1267 (for those suspected of funding Al-Qaeda or the Taliban).

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